



Memories & Traditions Inside an Iron Skillet

Each New Year seems to pass more rapidly than the last with less family time.

In this world of multitasking, making and eating a Chicago-style pizza together has become one delicious way we enjoy our time together. Chicago winters necessitate hearty meals that feed body and soul.

So in the 1940's Chicago families invented an inexpensive but tasty new casserole, the deep-dish, double-crust, stuffed pizza. The web reads "Best Pizza in America" (NBC) and "Ultimate Pizza is found in Chicago" (NY Times). Why else would Southerners spend sixty dollars having one shipped to Atlanta? Instead take a ten inch cast-iron skillet and try this at home.

For beginners buy fresh pizza dough at Publix keeping it cool until its time to roll. Have ready butter, garlic, shredded mozzarella, Parmesan, pasta sauce, fresh basil, and perhaps mushrooms, or spinach, or pre-cooked sausage.

Lightly butter and salt the inside of the iron skillet. Roll-out pizza dough as for pie, creating two crusts, one approx. 15 inches and the other roughly 10 inches. Press the larger crust inside the skillet. Keep extra over the sides to pinch later with top crust.

Layer-up the pizza with mozzarella, garlic, basil. Add mushrooms, or what ever you please ... except anything juicy or you'll have a soup. Continue filling the pizza, layer by layer, until reaching the top. Next place the top crust and pinch the lower and top crust as a pie. Only on the outer-side of the top crust, spread pasta sauce and dust all with Parmesan.

IMPORTANT: rapidly heat the filled skillet on the stove-top until the handle is warm and the butter begins to bubble along the insides. When the skillet is very hot move all to the pre-heated 325 oven and bake for 30 or so minutes. Your efforts will disappoint if you forget to heat the pie-filled skillet on the stove-top before baking.

Finally, patience is the next virtue. Resist the urge to eat immediately. Like a pie, let this pizza rest a bit in the skillet before serving. Cut the pizza carefully before you bring the (still warm) skillet to the dinner table.

Try this at home for delicious family memories. You will be amazed how easy it is to create the Best Pizza in America. Don't plan on any desert because you will not have room. Make a New Year's resolution now to create the time for this event. We all have to eat anyway, so make it delicious, easy, fun and memorable. If this is not heaven, it is at least closer.

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